

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 003153

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/18/2012

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PRELIMINARY TENTATIVE TIMETABLE FOR ELECTIONS

REF: ABUJA 3139

Classified by Ambassador Howard F. Jeter. Reasons 1.5 (B & D).

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) To help Washington (and us) track events, we have developed the following electoral timetable based on the best information available at this point. This tentative calendar provides schedules for political party activities and for holding of elections. However, we have to add several important caveats. INEC continues to lag behind in its preparations (reftel). One of the issues still in gestation is the actual dates for holding the elections. Additionally, many other issues remain to be resolved before a timetable is finalized. This is the best current information but it is fluid and we expect many of these dates to change. Dates to watch are:

Nov. 21, 2002 - Supreme Court releases written decision on
-- its ruling that INEC's registration guidelines
-- were too stringent.

Nov. 29, 2002 - Supreme Court decision on the 2002
-- Electoral Bill (the court will decide on INEC's
-- objection to the law's provision to hold all
-- state and federal elections on the same day.)

December, 2002 - INEC promises voters list by an
-- unspecified date this month (or early January)

Dec. 10 - Ruling PDP requires candidate nominations for
-- local government elections and other party
-- caucuses

Dec. 21 - PDP requires candidate nominations for all other
-- elections (except President) by this day

Jan. 3-5, 2003 - PDP Presidential caucus scheduled

Jan. 7 - ANPP Presidential caucus scheduled

February - Local government elections possible during this
-- month

March - State (Gubernatorial and State Assembly) and
-- National Assembly elections possible

April - Presidential election possible (Depending on the
-- outcome of INEC's lawsuit challenging the 2002
-- electoral law, all state and federal elections
-- may take place on the same day. If the election
-- is not held between March 29 and April 29,
-- constitutional issues could be raised.)

May 29 - Constitutionally mandated handover to newly-
-- elected government

END SUMMARY.

ELECTIONS

2. (C) The Independent Nigerian Election Commission

(INEC) and the largest political parties continue their preparations for the 2003 elections. INEC is primarily focused on finding a way to salvage its problematic September voter registration exercise (reftel) and has not given sufficient attention to preparations for the actual conducting of elections or even to the preparation of a final electoral timetable. Even though the National Assembly appropriated 27.8 billion Naira for INEC last week, there is no indication of when those funds will be released. Further, by Guobadia's own estimate, INEC needs 19.8 billion Naira to complete the registration process, leaving a balance of only 8 billion Naira (about \$61 million, or \$1 per voter) for an expected four separate elections. Still, INEC Chairman Dr. Abel Guobadia commented last week that the voters list is expected by "early December" and predicted Local Government Authority elections in February. He refused to provide more detail to the reporter, but said that Presidential elections will hold "in April." In large part, the timetable will depend on the outcome of the Supreme Court hearing on the 2002 Electoral Bill. A decision on that is expected on November 29, 2002.

13. (SBU) Working back from the May 29, 2003 deadline for handing over to a newly-elected government, the following two scenarios emerge. The first timetable assumes staggered elections (INEC's preference).

Scenario I

-- early-December - Voters list issued for public scrutiny
-- early-January - Final voters list available
-- early-March - Local Government Authority elections held
-- mid-March - State elections held
-- early April - Federal elections held
-- mid-April - Presidential elections held.

This timeline leaves little room for error and flexibility is limited by the current lack of planning and the constitutionally-mandated handover date.

Scenario II

14. (SBU) If elections are held under the new 2002 Electoral law, the latest dates possible are:

-- mid-January - Voters list issued for public scrutiny
-- mid-February - Final voters list available
-- mid-April - Local Government Authority elections held
-- late-April - State, Federal, and Presidential elections held.

The 2002 Electoral Act allows for compressing the elections schedule within constitutional limits. However, the Presidency and State Governors are opposed to holding elections on the same day, believing that it would diminish the coattail effect of their hoped-for election victories on national and state assembly elections. The National Assembly, on the other hand, favors a single-day poll. During a meeting with the President on November 20 (septel), he again repeated his belief that Presidential, State and National Assembly elections on the same day were "impossible."

PARTY CAUCUSES

15. (SBU) Among the parties currently registered, only the ruling PDP has announced a relatively complete timeline for holding its party caucuses. The results of the PDP's ward-level caucus are to be submitted by November 23, 2002. The vast majority of ward congresses were conducted in July, so the November 23 deadline may not pose a major hurdle. The joker in the deck is possible court challenges, as many of the caucuses were disrupted or called into question because of alleged rigging or intimidation. (PDP ward congresses select candidates for LGA offices and nominate ten delegates to the state caucus.)

16. (U) By Dec. 10, the LGA caucus should select state assembly candidates, three delegates to the State party congress and one delegate to the National congress. The State congresses have been instructed by the PDP's party headquarters to select candidates for the "Federal Constituency" by Dec. 17, Senatorial candidates by Dec. 21,

and its Presidential aspirant by Jan 3 - 5 (a national convention?).

17. (SBU) The All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP) is split into at least two factions and is embroiled in lawsuits over the authority of the various factions. Like the PDP, most of the ward-level work was completed months ago but the steps leading up to its Presidential congress have not been announced. Regardless of the ANPP's decision, the party will strive to delay major decisions until after the PDP party congress has announced a Presidential ticket. ANPP officials have told us they will seek to nominate the candidate judged most likely to defeat the PDP standard bearer. At a party convention held in Enugu November 16-17 by one faction, the party's name was officially changed to ANPP from All People's Party (APP) and January 7 was set as the date for selecting a presidential candidate. The other faction is contesting the change and the date.

18. (SBU) The Alliance for Democracy (AD) also held ward congresses, but has been modifying some of the decisions taken months ago. It has not advanced very far in planning its primaries for State, Federal and Presidential elections. The three new parties, UNPP, ANGA, and the NDP have not announced timelines. The AD is primarily a regional party, and the other three are untested vehicles for electoral competition. None has a presidential candidate of national stature at this time.

19. (C) COMMENT: Timelines are not fixed and most dates are subject to change. The only date which is fixed is the May 29 inauguration of a new civilian government. With six months left, the PDP and the ANPP are currently the only two parties with discernible national structures and with probable presidential candidates who have the stature and exposure to be a factor in the 2003 elections. However, we cannot count the other parties out. As the politicking unfolds, there will be carpet-crossing and defections.

110. (C) COMMENT CONTINUED: The lack of definite schedules by the political parties is one thing, the torpor of INEC is quite another. INEC is the key to a successful electoral process, and the chances of that will be enhanced the sooner INEC can promulgate a definitive schedule and show that it is working towards implementing it. Already, we are hearing murmurs among some politicians that they expect elections to be postponed beyond the constitutional limit, an action which would be highly controversial. The electoral schedule is another issue that the Mission, independently and within the context of the "Friends" group, will be taking up with INEC.

JETER